Ground Zero

UPDATE

GT 12/11/92

Gay rights group wants boycott to target Springs

By **Louis Aguilar**/Gazette Telegraph

Vowing to combat what they say is the hate sparked by Amendment 2, members of a new group dubbed Ground Zero declared Thursday that they will try to shift the budding nationwide boycott of Colorado to Colorado Springs.

Before a crowd of about 300 people in the All Souls Unitarian Church, organizers said the group will identify businesses supporting the amendment and circulate lists of those businesses. It also plans to contact potential convention groups and urge them to stay away from Colorado Springs. The group's organizers also promised to increase the visibility of the local gay community to counteract the myths and stereotypes perpetuated by the Springs-based group Colorado for Family Values, the author of Amendment 2.

The constitutional amendment, approved by voters Nov. 3, bars laws protecting gays from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

As other critics have, Ground Zero officials say the campaign by the Springs group smeared homosexuals as "subhuman" and that its passage has brought increased gay-bashing. In Denver, the number of hate crimes has jumped threefold since Nov. 3, a monitoring group has said. Locally, Poor Richards Bookstore and Restaurant, a business with a liberal reputation, has suffered anti-gay graffiti, a broken window and threatening phone calls.

Other plans by Ground Zero include coordinating a national gay-and-lesbian-rights march in Colorado Springs next year, having local gays speak at churches and other community sites about the gay lifestyle and lobbying minority leaders to speak out against the amendment.

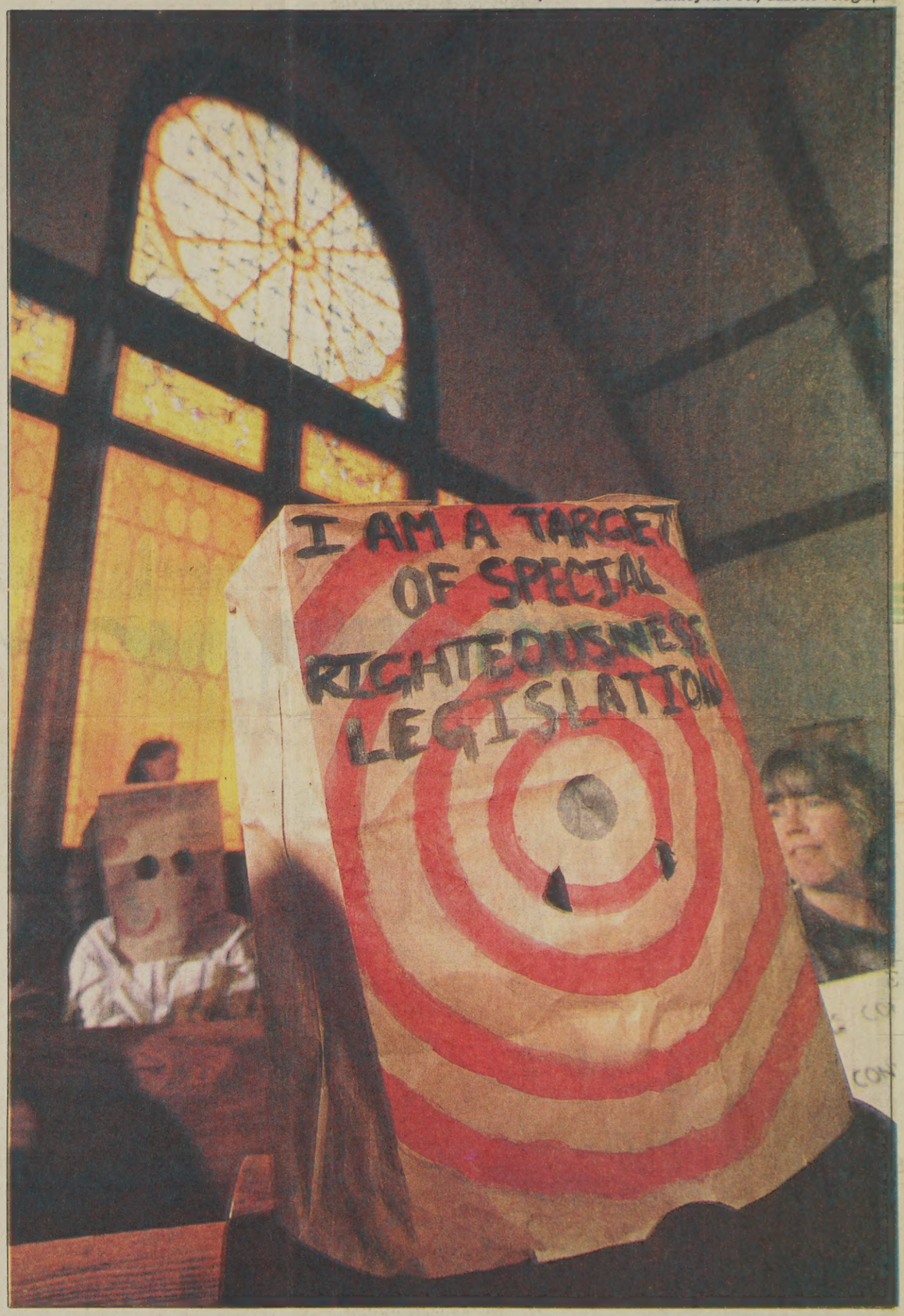
The group has about 400 members, many of whom didn't get involved before the Nov. 3 election. Those who spoke Thursday included a lesbian woman, Patricia Hewitt, who publicly "outed" herself by declaring her homosexuality. As a handful of people in the crowd did, she wore a paper bag over her head. But when she rose to speak, she tore it off. The crowd gave her a standing ovation.

"I have been an invisible lesbian for 20 years. But I cannot remain invisible any longer. Amendment 2 has taken away my basic civil rights," Hewitt said.

Another Ground Zero member was "straight, white, Christian male" Rob Gordon. Gordon's speech was typical of the angry tone of the day. "I refuse to remain silent in the face of such falsehood . . . such injustice . . . such intolerance. And I refuse to give over my Bible and my Gospel to a radical fringe of Christianity that misuses, abuses and perverts its message into one of condemnation and punishment."

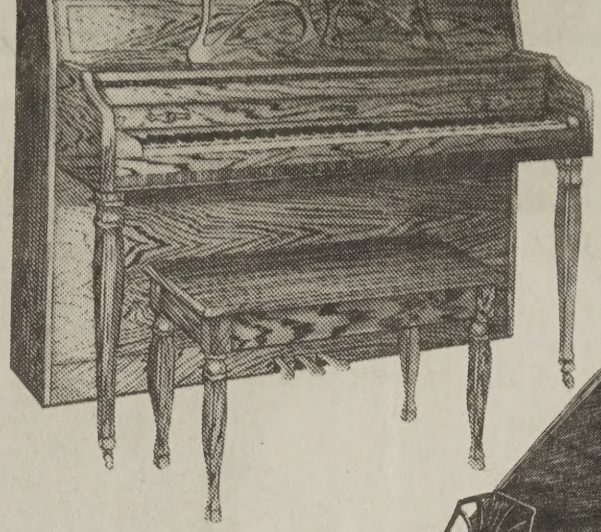
He added. "Read the amendment carefully. Skip the special-rights rhetoric and go right to the last clause."

Smiley N. Pool/Gazette Telegraph



A few people at an anti-Amendment 2 meeting Thursday at All Souls Unitarian Church wear paper bags over their heads, with bull's-eyes symbolizing the hate they say the amendment directs at gays. Some also said they wore the bags to conceal their identities for fear of reprisals.

The last clause bars homosexuals from claiming discrimination if they lose their job or are kicked out of a rental residence because of their sexual orientation, which Family Values official Will Perkins on Thursday described as a special right. "I don't have a special right to keep my job as a heterosexual. Why should they if they are homosexual?" he said.



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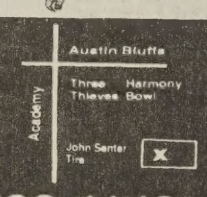

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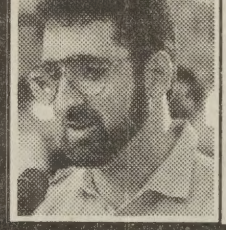

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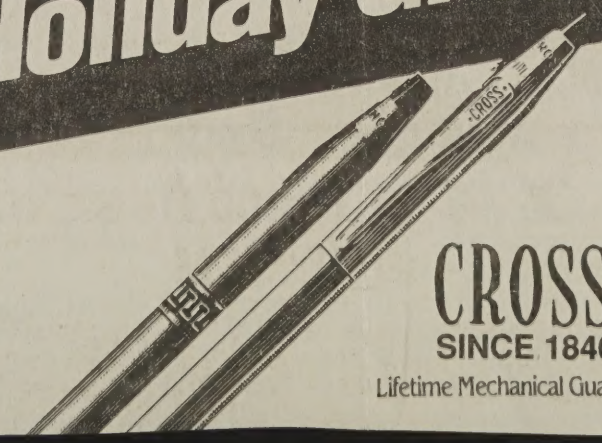

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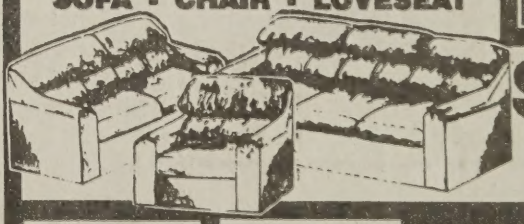

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